

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently amended) A sound-volume controlling method, ~~of controlling sound volume per step, the sound volume controlling method comprising:~~

~~specifying an arbitrary first range of steps from a predetermined number of control steps through which a sound volume is to be varied at a first change rate, the predetermined number of control steps corresponding to a predetermined output sound volume control range over which the sound volume may be varied; a step zone in which a volume change amount per step is to be changed;~~

~~changing the first change rate of the first range of steps to a second change rate lower than the first change rate and changing the first change rate of a second range of the predetermined number of control steps other than the first range of steps to a third change rate higher than the first change rate; and a first volume change amount per step in specified step zone to obtain a second volume change amount per step without a change in total number of steps; and~~

~~controlling the sound volume over a range corresponding to the first range of steps based on the second change rate or over a range corresponding to the second range of steps based on the third change rate. volume change amount, wherein~~

~~the changing includes changing the first volume change amount in the specified step zone to be less than a default value, and changing a volume change amount per step in at least one step zone other than the specified step zone to be more than the default value to maintain the total number of steps, and~~

~~the specifying includes specifying an arbitrary width of the step zone in a range of the total number of steps.~~

14. (Currently amended) The sound-volume controlling method according to claim 13, wherein the changing includes changing the first change rate of a third range of the predetermined number of control steps other than the first and second ranges of control steps

~~to the third change rate, a volume change amount per step to be uniform in all step zones except for the specified step zone.~~

15. (Currently amended) The sound-volume controlling method according to claim 13, wherein the changing includes changing the first change rate of a third range of the predetermined number of control steps other than the first and second ranges of control steps to a fourth change rate higher than the first change rate and different from the third change rate, a volume change amount per step to be different in all step zones except for the specified step zone.

16. (Currently amended) The sound-volume controlling method according to claim 13, wherein

the specifying includes specifying all of the predetermined number of control steps, and an entire step zone, and

the changing includes changing the first change rate of all of the predetermined number of control steps to a fifth change rate lower than the first change rate, a volume change amount per step in the entire step zone.

17. (Currently amended) A sound-volume controller ~~that controls sound volume per step, the sound-volume controller~~ comprising:

a zone specifying unit that specifies an arbitrary first range of steps from a predetermined number of control steps through which a sound volume is to be varied at a first change rate, the predetermined number of control steps corresponding to a predetermined output sound volume control range over which the sound volume may be varied ~~a step zone in which a volume change amount per step is to be changed;~~

a changing unit that changes the first change rate of the first range of steps to a second change rate lower than the first change rate and changing the first change rate of a second range of the predetermined number of control steps other than the first range of steps to a third change rate higher than the first change rate; and a first volume change amount per step in specified step zone to obtain a second volume change amount per step without a change in total number of steps; and

a controlling unit that controls the sound volume over a range corresponding to the first range of steps based on the second change rate or over a range corresponding to the second range of steps based on the third change rate. ~~volume change amount~~, wherein

~~the changing unit changes the first volume change amount in the specified step zone to be less than a default value, and changes a volume change amount per step in at least one step zone other than the specified step zone to be more than the default value to maintain the total number of steps, and~~

~~the zone specifying unit specifies an arbitrary width of the step zone in a range of the total number of steps.~~

18. (Previously presented) The sound-volume controller according to claim 17, further comprising a storage unit that stores therein a pattern of a volume change amount per step as a volume control curve, wherein

the changing unit changes the volume change amount per step based on the volume control curve.

19. (Currently amended) Electronic equipment comprising a sound-volume controller ~~that controls sound volume per step~~, wherein the sound-volume controller includes:

a zone specifying unit that specifies an arbitrary first range of steps from a predetermined number of control steps through which a sound volume is to be varied at a first change rate, the predetermined number of control steps corresponding to a predetermined output sound volume control range over which the sound volume may be varied; ~~a step zone in which a volume change amount per step is to be changed;~~

a changing unit that changes the first change rate of the first range of steps to a second change rate lower than the first change rate and changing the first change rate of a second range of the predetermined number of control steps other than the first range of steps to a third change rate higher than the first change rate; and ~~a first volume change amount per step in specified step zone to obtain a second volume change amount per step without a change in total number of steps; and~~

a controlling unit that controls the sound volume over a range corresponding to the first range of steps based on the second change rate or over a range corresponding to the second range of steps based on the third change rate. ~~volume change amount~~;

~~the changing unit changes the first volume change amount in the specified step zone to be less than a default value, and changes a volume change amount per step in at least one step zone other than the specified step zone to be more than the default value to maintain the total number of steps, and~~

~~the zone specifying unit specifies an arbitrary width of the step zone in a range of the total number of steps.~~

20. (Previously presented) The electronic equipment according to claim 19, wherein the sound-volume controller further includes a storage unit that stores therein a pattern of a volume change amount per step as a volume control curve, and

the changing unit changes the volume change amount per step based on the volume control curve.

21. (Currently amended) A computer-readable recording medium that stores therein a computer program for controlling sound volume ~~per step~~, the computer program causing a computer to execute:

specifying an arbitrary first range of steps from a predetermined number of control steps through which a sound volume is to be varied at a first change rate, the predetermined number of control steps corresponding to a predetermined output sound volume control range over which the sound volume may be varied; a step zone in which a volume change amount per step is to be changed;

changing the first change rate of the first range of steps to a second change rate lower than the first change rate and changing the first change rate of a second range of the predetermined number of control steps other than the first range of steps to a third change rate higher than the first change rate; and a first volume change amount per step in specified step zone to obtain a second volume change amount per step without a change in total number of steps; and

controlling the sound volume over a range corresponding to the first range of steps based on the second change rate or over a range corresponding to the second range of steps based on the third change rate ~~volume change amount, wherein~~

~~the changing includes changing the first volume change amount in the specified step zone to be less than a default value, and changing a volume change amount per step in at least~~

~~one step zone other than the specified step zone to be more than the default value to maintain the total number of steps, and~~

~~the specifying includes specifying an arbitrary width of the step zone in a range of the total number of steps.~~